



Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 322 N. Commercial St Bellingham WA 98225
(360) 778-6234 www.whatcomcounty.us/914/Weeds

SMOOTH/EUROPEAN HAWKWEED COMPLEX

Hieracium laevigatum / *Hieracium sabaudum*

THREAT: These hawkweeds, introduced from Europe, are very difficult to distinguish and are very invasive. In Whatcom County, these hawkweeds have become a problem on road shoulders and are being assisted in their spread by vehicles. Plants reproduce by seed, which is wind dispersed. Dense stands of hawkweed can exclude most other vegetation. Although it is mainly found on road shoulders in this area, plants are starting to invade fields and other areas adjacent to roadside infestations.

DESCRIPTION: In Europe, these hawkweeds are quite variable and may differ in some characteristics from the plants growing in Washington. The plants growing here are perennials, usually growing between 1 and 3 feet tall. The plant has a basal rosette of leaves, which are still present during flowering, and a few leaves (at least 2) growing up the flowering stalk. The leaves are lance-shaped and toothed, with hairs primarily on the underside of the leaf. The flowering stem has dense hairs below the flower heads, with more sparse hairs lower on the stem. A cluster of yellow flower heads grows near the top of the flowering stem, although a few flower heads may branch off further down the stem. The flower heads are bright yellow, and in Whatcom County, flowering usually peaks in August. The seedhead looks like a smaller version of the familiar dandelion “puffball” and the seeds are similarly dispersed by the wind.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Small stands of hawkweed can be dug by hand. Care must be taken to remove as much of the root system as possible. The area must be monitored for seedlings taking advantage of the disturbed soil. Mowing is ineffectual and may actually contribute to the spread of this plant. Hawkweed can be controlled through chemical methods; contact the weed control board for site specific recommendations.

